

## Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Eliza Symonds Bell, February 9, 1879, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Mrs. Alexander Melville Bell. 1509 R. I. Ave.,  
February 9th., (1879). My dear Mrs. Bell:

I hope you believe no news is good news as otherwise I fear you will hardly know how to account for our long silence. In our case the saying has proved true, so I hope you will forgive me. Alec has been troubled for a week with business affairs and has felt accordingly very blue and I have had to be most economical, but the fit is fast blowing over now, and I don't see the great need of going without a pretty bit of finery because it coats fifty-cents. Accordingly I am sporting a pale blue silk handkerchief twisted into a turban which is a very pretty fashion for economy headgear just now.

Elsie is fat and oh so heavy in the agonies of pronouncing Ma ma — papa, ba ba ba, va fa fa, she mastered long ago and shouts a s t the top of her voice all day long. The house has proved so fearfully draughty and the weather so cold that I never like to lay the little thing on the floor, so she cannot creep, though my Uncle Eustis' baby only two weeks her senior crawls around all over. She got all wrong with her fourth tooth and the Doctor determined to change her food entirely and so gave her beef tea which had the desired effect, of putting her right and giving her good night rest, which before she never had. She was so pleased with her new food, the only trouble was that we dared not give her as much as she wanted, so finally so tried varying it with Mellin's Food which succeeded admirably. When she is ten months old she is to have mutton and chicken broth, meanwhile we occasionally give her a cracker or stale bread crust which she values as a dog his bone and screams most lustily if one but looks enviously at her treasure. Today we gave her an orange to play with, she bit a hole in it with her sharp teeth and then made a face at it. To try her Alec gave the orange back to her — same

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performance. We tried her five times and then she was crying most pitifully from the pain of the smarting, and yet, she wanted 2 her orange back. She begins to grow a little shy of strangers and to show preferences, liking her nurse and her grand papa best, when she goes to his house she never leaves him in peace but is forever squealing calling and making faces at him, wanting him to jump and dance her till after a long call poor papa spends the next hour or so on the sofa quite exhausted. I have been meaning to have her photograph taken, but she has taken some time to get back the flesh and color she lost after you left.

Alec has been to Boston twice, once for ten days and then again Friday, returning only this afternoon. He has gone to bed quite tired out not having taken off his clothes since leaving home. However, he feels satisfied that things will go on all right now.

Our house is quite changed from what it was when you saw it. Mamma lent me six chairs of here to put in the parlor, two armchairs and four small ones to match, then the one Alec gave me has come home and is very handsome, though not showing to the greatest advantage on the light carpet, it is of dark turkish material. My lace curtains and those papa gave me Xmas are up. My davenport stands on one side of the fireplace, the ebony cabinet opposite, an engraving of the Sistine Madonna over the fireplace, and your lovely water color of Rosslyn Chapel and a pretty bas-relief of cupids hang over the davenport, a photograph from a modern french painter framed in a painted frame of daisies over the sofa, a Japanese lady between the windows etc. I am going to buy a large handsome Turkish rug to put down in place of the ugly one before the stove, then I think we shall be very fine. Don't you think then you had best come down and see how we look, at least, if Mary will promise not to play on the piano with Alec all the time, we shall expect her to keep the promise and come and make us a visit. I am afraid we shall not have much society to offer her as we have not of course been here long enough to have many friends though several calls have 3 been made and returned. People here seem to spend their time in making calls and in receiving. I am just now waiting anxiously for the member from Boston to call on me as she said she could and the Senator from Mass. has been here.

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Then I am only waiting for Alice to go with me to Mrs. Hayes reception. Tomorrow to a large reception at Mrs. Pollocks. Sister and Berta helping her to receive along with two other young ladies.

Now I must go down to my "lonely" supper.

With love to Mr. Bell and hoping you enjoy your visit to Kingston,

Lovingly, Your daughter, Mabel.